WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A zoom lens comprising, in order from an object side to an image side:

a first lens unit of a negative optical power;

a second lens unit of a positive optical power; and

a third lens unit of a positive optical power, said third lens unit having a cemented lens formed by cementing a positive lens element to a negative lens element and moving along an optical axis for zooming,

wherein a space between said first and second lens units decreases, and a space between said second lens unit and said third lens unit increases in zooming from a wide angle end to a telephoto end, and

letting NLi be the number of lens elements constituting an ith lens unit, a condition defined by

$$NL3 < NL2 \leq NL1$$

is satisfied.

2. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein

said first lens unit has, in order from the object side to the image side, a negative lens element in a meniscus shape with a concave surface facing the image side and a positive lens element in a meniscus shape with a convex surface facing the object side, and has not less than three lens elements, and

said second lens unit consists of, in order from

the object side to the image side, a cemented lens formed by cementing a positive lens element to a negative lens element and a positive lens element in a biconvex shape.

3. A zoom lens according to claim 2, wherein letting d be a thickness of the cemented lens of said second lens unit on the optical axis, and fw be a focal length of an overall system at a wide angle end, a conditional expression,

$$0.3 < d/fw < 0.5$$

is satisfied.

4. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein

said first lens unit has, in order from the object side to the image side, a negative lens element in a meniscus shape with a concave surface facing the image side and a positive lens element in a meniscus shape with a convex surface facing the object side, and

said second lens unit consists of, in order from the object side to the image side, a cemented lens formed by cementing a positive lens element to a negative lens element and a positive lens element in a biconvex shape.

5. A zoom lens according to claim 4, wherein letting d be a thickness of the cemented lens of said

second lens unit on the optical axis, and fw be a focal length of an overall system at a wide angle end, a conditional expression,

$$0.3 < d/fw < 0.5$$

is satisfied.

6. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein said second lens unit has, in order from the object side to the image side, a cemented lens formed by cementing a positive lens element to a negative lens element and a positive lens element with biconvex surfaces, and

letting Ra be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of the cemented lens of said second lens unit which is located nearest to the object side, Rb be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of the cemented lens of said second lens unit which is nearest to an image side, Rc be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of said biconvex positive lens element which is located on the object side, and Rd be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of said biconvex positive lens element which is located on the image side, conditional expressions,

$$0.7 < Rb/Ra < 1.2$$

$$-0.6 < (Rd + Rc)/(Rd - Rc) < 0.6$$

are satisfied.

7. A zoom lens according to claim 6, wherein letting d be a thickness of the cemented lens of said second lens unit on the optical axis, and fw be a focal length of an overall system at a wide angle end, a conditional expression,

$$0.3 < d/fw < 0.5$$

is satisfied.

8. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein a lens surface of said second lens unit which is located nearest to the object side has a convex shape on the object side and has aspherical shape which is designed to weaken a converging effect from the optical axis to a periphery.

9. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein said third lens unit moves along a convex locus to the image side in zooming from the wide angle end to the telephoto end.

10. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein

said second and third lens units move along the optical axis for zooming, and

said second lens unit has a cemented lens formed by cementing a positive lens element to a negative lens element.

11. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein letting f3n be a focal length of the negative lens element of the cemented lens of said third lens unit, f3 be a focal length of said third lens unit, ν3n be an Abbe number of the negative lens element of the cemented lens of said third lens unit, and N3n be a refractive index, conditional expressions,

$$0.8 < f3n/f3 < 1.7$$

$$\nu 3n < 40$$

$$1.7 < N3n$$

are satisfied.

12. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein said first lens unit has, in order from the object side to the image side, a positive lens element with a convex surface facing the object side, a negative lens element in a meniscus shape with a concave surface facing an image side, a negative lens element, and a positive lens element in a meniscus shape with a convex surface facing the object side.

13. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein letting M1 be a zoom position where said third lens unit is located nearest to the image side in an entire zooming range, x3w be a moving distance of said third lens unit in zooming from the wide angle end to the zoom position M1, and x3t be a moving distance of said

third lens unit in zooming from the zoom position M1 to the telephoto end, a conditional expression,

$$0.2 < x3w/x3t < 3.0$$

is satisfied.

14. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein letting $\beta 3t$ be a lateral magnification of said third lens unit at the telephoto end, a conditional expression,

$$0.6 < \beta 3t < 0.8$$

is satisfied.

15. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein said third lens unit moves along the optical axis for focusing.

16. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein said second lens unit has, in order from the object side to the image side a cemented lens formed by cementing a positive lens element to a negative lens element and a positive lens element in a biconvex shape surfaces, and

letting Ra be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of the cemented lens of said second lens unit which is located nearest to the object side, Rb be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of the cemented lens of said second lens unit which is located nearest

to an image side, Rc be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of said positive lens element in a biconvex shape which is located on the object side, Rd be a radius of curvature of a lens surface of said positive lens element in the biconvex shape which is located on the image side, d be a thickness of the cemented lens of said second lens unit on the optical axis, fw be a focal length of an overall system at a wide angle end, f3n be a focal length of the negative lens element of the cemented lens of said third lens unit, f3 be a focal length of said third lens unit, ν3n be an Abbe number of the negative lens element of the cemented lens of said third lens unit, and N3n be a refractive index, conditional expressions,

$$0.7 < Rb/Ra < 1.2$$

$$-0.6 < (Rd + Rc)/(Rd - Rc) < 0.6$$

$$0.3 < d/fw < 0.5$$

$$0.8 < f3n/f3 < 1.7$$

$$\nu 3n < 40$$

$$1.7 < N3n$$

are satisfied.

17. A zoom lens according to claim 16, wherein letting M1 be a zoom position where said third lens unit is located nearest to the image side in an entire zooming range, x3w be a moving distance of said third lens unit in zooming from the wide angle end to the

zoom position M1, x3t be a moving distance of said third lens unit in zooming from the zoom position M1 to the telephoto end, and β3t be a lateral magnification of said third lens unit at the telephoto end,

conditional expressions,

$$0.2 < x3w/x3t < 3.0$$

$$0.6 < \beta3t < 0.8$$

are satisfied.

18. A zoom lens according to claim 1, wherein said zoom lens forms an image on a photoelectric conversion element.

19. An image taking apparatus comprising an image taking lens for forming an image of an object on a photosensitive surface, said image taking lens comprising said zoom lens defined in claim 1.

20. An image taking apparatus comprising:

a photoelectric conversion element; and

an image taking lens for forming an image of an object on a photosensitive surface, said image taking lens comprising said zoom lens defined in claim 1.